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VERSES

ON

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S PAINTED WINDOW

AT NEW-COLLEGE OXFORD.

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The following piece was never originally designed for the preſs, and would not have appeared in public, if it had not been incorrectly circulated in manuſcript.

VERSES

ON

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S PAINTED WINDOW

AT NEW-COLLEGE OXFORD.

AH, ſtay thy treacherous hand, forbear to trace
Thoſe faultleſs forms of elegance and grace!
Ah, ceaſe to ſpread the bright tranſparent maſs,
With Titian's pencil, o'er the ſpeaking glaſs!
Nor ſteal, by ſtrokes of art with truth combin'd,
The fond illuſions of my wayward mind!

For long, enamour'd of a barbarous age,
A faithleſs truant to the claſſic page;
Long have I lov'd to catch the ſimple chime
Of minſtrel-harps, and ſpell the fabling rime;
To view the feſtive rites, the knightly play,
That deck'd heroic Albion's elder day;
To mark the mouldering halls of barons bold,
And the rough caſtle, caſt in giant-mould;
With Gothic manners Gothic arts explore,
And muſe on the magnificence of yore.

But chief, enraptur'd have I lov'd to roam,
A lingering votary, the vaulted dome,
Where the tall ſhafts, that mount in maſſy pride,
Their mingling branches ſhoot from ſide to ſide;

Where

Where elfin ſculptors, with fantaſtic clew,
Oer the long roof their wild embroidery drew;
Where SUPERSTITION, with capricious hand
In many a maze the wreathed window plann'd,
With hues romantic ting'd the gorgeous pane,
To fill with holy light the wonderous fane;
To aid the builder's model, richly rude,
By no Vitruvian ſymmetry ſubdued;
To ſuit the genius of the myſtic pile:
Whilſt as around the far-retiring ile,
And fretted ſhrines with hoary trophies hung,
Her dark illumination wide ſhe flung,
With new ſolemnity, the nooks profound,
The caves of death, and the dim arches frown'd.
From bliſs long felt unwillingly we part:
Ah, ſpare the weakneſs of a lover's heart!

Chaſe not the phantoms of my fairy dream,

Phantoms that ſhrink at Reaſon's painful gleam!

That ſofter touch, inſidious artiſt, ſtay,

Nor to new joys my ſtruggling breaſt betray!

Such was a penſive bard's miſtaken ſtrain.—

But, oh, of raviſh'd pleaſures why complain?

No more the matchleſs ſkill I call unkind

That ſtrives to diſenchant my cheated mind.

For when again I view thy chaſte Deſign,

The juſt proportion, and the genuin line;

Thoſe native pourtraitures of Attic art,

That from the lucid ſurface ſeem to ſtart;

Thoſe tints, that ſteal no glories from the day,

Nor aſk the ſun to lend his ſtreaming ray;

The doubtful radiance of contending dies,
That faintly mingle, yet diſtinctly riſe;
Twixt light and ſhade the tranſitory ſtrife;
The feature blooming with immortal life:
The ſtole in caſual foldings taught to flow,
Not with ambitious ornaments to glow;
The tread majeſtic, and the beaming eye
That lifted ſpeaks its commerce with the ſky:
Sudden, the ſombrous imagery is fled,
Which late my viſionary rapture fed:
Thy powerful hand has broke the Gothic chain,
And brought my boſom back to truth again:
To truth, by no peculiar taſte confin'd,
Whoſe univerſal pattern ſtrikes mankind;
To truth, whoſe bold and unreſiſted aim
Checks frail caprice, and faſhion's fickle claim;

To truth, whoſe Charms deception's magic quell,
And bind coy Fancy in a ſtronger ſpell.

Ye brawny Prophets, that in robes ſo rich,
At diſtance due, poſſeſs the criſped nich;
Ye Rows of Patriarchs, that ſublimely rear'd,
Diffuſe a proud primeval length of beard:

Ye Saints, who clad in crimſon's bright array,
More pride than humble poverty diſplay:
Ye Virgins meek, that wear the palmy crown
Of patient faith, and yet ſo fiercely frown:

Ye Angels, that from golden clouds recline,
But boaſt no ſemblance to a race divine:
Ye tragic Tales of legendary lore,
That draw devotion's ready tear no more:

Ye

Ye Martyrdoms of unenlighten'd days,

Ye Miracles, that now no wonder raiſe:

Shapes, that with one broad glare the gazer ſtrike,

Kings, Biſhops, Nuns, Apoſtles, all alike!

Ye Colours, that th' unwary ſight amaze,

And only dazzle in the noontide blaze!

No more the Sacred Window's round diſgrace,

But yield to Grecian groupes the ſhining ſpace.

Lo, from the canvas Beauty ſhifts her throne,

Lo, Picture's powers a new formation own!

Behold, ſhe prints upon the cryſtal plain,

With her own energy, th' expreſſive ſtain!

The mighty Maſter ſpreads his mimic toil

More wide, nor only blends the breathing oil;

But calls the lineaments of life compleat

From genial alchymy's creative heat;

Obedient forms to the bright fuſion gives,
While in the warm enamel Nature lives.

ARTIST, tis thine, from the broad window's height,
To add new luſtre to religious light:
Not of it's pomp to ſtrip this antient ſhrine,
But bid that pomp with purer radiance ſhine:
With arts unknown before, to reconcile
The willing Graces to the Gothic pile.

THE END.